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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Appropriations**  
**Washington, DC 20515-6015**

March 17, 2000

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The Honorable Rodney E. Slater  
Secretary  
Department of Transportation  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I was extremely disappointed to hear today of your criticisms that the Committee-passed House Budget Resolution for fiscal year 2001 could lead to significant reductions in funding for the Coast Guard. I understand you made those comments while expressing to reporters the administration's enthusiasm and support for the AIR21 aviation reauthorization bill. That is ironic, because, if anything it is not the House Budget Resolution but AIR21 which will cause those reductions.

You know that the huge budget increases in AIR21 must be paid for by somebody. You also know that the funding guarantees in AIR21 reduce budget flexibility – essentially requiring that any shortfall be borne by the Coast Guard, FAA Operations, or Amtrak. Implying that those bills should be paid by the agencies of other cabinet secretaries, rather than by your own department, is irresponsible. Likewise, it is the easy way out to support the huge funding increases in AIR21 – increases not even supported in your own budget request for 2001 – without offering a clue as to how those increases should be paid for.

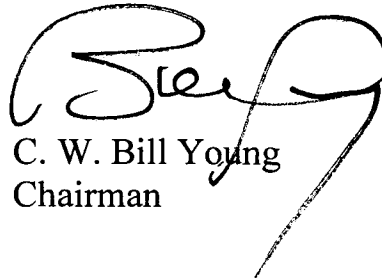
If you are really concerned about Coast Guard funding, I suggest you recommend that the President veto AIR21. Such an action would not only provide your office and mine more budget flexibility in the coming years, it would help us ensure that significant Coast Guard cuts do not occur. The Budget Committee's

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recommendation is merely a reflection of what can occur when the President signs into law legislation which raises spending without offsets. If you recommend to the President that AIR21 be enacted, you will also bear a huge responsibility when the Coast Guard or FAA do not receive needed funds.

Frankly, Mr. Secretary, your department deserves better.

Sincerely,



C. W. Bill Young  
Chairman